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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE'S MEETING WITH SRSG KAI EIDE

Classified By: AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE, FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D

¶1. (C) Summary: In a March 19 meeting with Ambassador Rice, SRSG and head of UNAMA Kai Eide emphasized the importance of building the capacity of the government and people of Afghanistan. Eide said few countries with active programs in Afghanistan have a national perspective. Instead, they are focused on success at the provincial level, which leads to "donor-generated fragmentation." He urged that donors be flexible in their programming and take advantage of the openings for progress that currently exist. Ambassador Rice said that Eide's mission was of critical importance to the U.S., and he had full U.S. support. Eide thanked Ambassador Rice and said it was crucial to have U.S. political support and to be seen as having the full support of the U.S. administration. End summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Rice began by thanking Eide for his work and the work of UNAMA. Eide brushed off recent media reports regarding himself and UNAMA, but emphasized that it was important for his work as SRSG to be seen as having the full support of the USG. Ambassador Rice assured him of this support. She noted that one of the key insights of the U.S. strategic review was the need for an increase in the civilian aspects of the U.S. presence in Afghanistan. Eide said he was "very happy" to hear this, and noted that UNAMA's presence and capability was still small and weak, but improving.

¶3. (C) Eide said the key to success in Afghanistan was institution and capacity building. Although Afghanistan receives significant technical assistance, this assistance is fragmented among provinces and donors. He called for a true national plan in Afghanistan, with the same skills being taught in the same way in all provinces, and experts being sent to the country based on Afghanistan's need, not a donor country's supply. He added that many donors build schools in comparatively safe areas, whereas it is more important for Afghan companies to do the work, in order to spur capacity building and job creation. Another example of the discrepancy between donor goals and the needs of Afghanistan is that donors are focused on improving primary schools, while little attention is given to higher education and vocational schools. Many young Afghans leave primary schools with no opportunities because of this lack of higher education.

¶4. (C) Eide praised a U.S./UK initiative to encourage governors to be more proactive in their provinces, and said he was working to channel more donor money into this initiative. However, too many donors focus only on provinces, said Eide, and too few donors have a national perspective. He feared that donors are viewing success in Afghanistan on a province level, and said this was leading to "donor-generated fragmentation." Eide also criticized a reliance on contractors to perform development projects. The goal of the contractors, said Eide, was swift completion of the project, not the future of Afghanistan.

¶5. (C) Ambassador Rice asked how the U.S. could help in New York. Eide replied that UNAMA's budget and recruitment were

on track, and the key priority was finding the right people. The most important is to have U.S. political support, said Eide. He added that coordination within the UN family is improving, based largely on the realization by specialized agencies such as OCHA and WFP that the SRSG can help improve their relationship with the government of Afghanistan. The government preferred a single UN point of contact, said Eide, and he added that the Afghanistan Foreign Minister had almost denied accreditation to the new OCHA office in Kabul.

16. (C) In closing, Eide discussed his relationship with Karzai, and said that some thought it was too close, but he believed this closeness had great utility. He said that Karzai has been less angry in recent months, but previously relations with the U.S. and other contributors had been quite tense. This anger had been about more than elections or civilian casualties, said Eide. He believed that if Karzai had to choose between support and dignity, he would always choose dignity. It was important to listen to Karzai and to minimize the impression that there were debates going on about his country in which he did not participate. Ambassador Rice agreed, and said General Eikenberry would be a very important interlocutor in Kabul. Eide said he had a very good relationship with General Eikenberry. He noted that he would be returning to Washington early next week, and he hoped to leave Washington with a new and more sharply focused draft for the chairman's statement he will issue at the March 31 Ministerial in The Hague.

Rice